



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Economic Development

781-455-7550 x213

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS

WEDNESDAY, January 7, 2015 7:30 AM

Charles River Room PSAB

Present: Glen Cammarano; Marty Jacobs; Peter Atallah; Rick Putprush; Tom Jacob; Moe Handel; Michael Wilcox; Bob Hentschel; Bruce Herman; and Lee Newman and Devra Bailin, staff

Not Present: Matt Talcoff, Chair; Bill Day; Janet O'Connor; Brian Nadler; Elizabeth Grimes; and Matt Borrelli

Also Present: Mark Roopenian, Normandy Real Estate Partners

I. Approval of Minutes

The members approved the minutes for the meeting of December 3, 2014.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates

Our next meeting will be on February 4th. Future meetings have been scheduled for the first Wednesday of the month (unless a holiday) in the Charles River Room at PSAB.

III. Update on Infrastructure Improvements in Needham Crossing

Devra explained that the public hearing on 25% plans for the Corridor project was held on December 3rd. As discussed last time, Town representatives met with Tom Currier, head of the Highland Avenue/Needham Street Corridor project for MassDOT, about administering the MassWorks grant for the Town and the City. That grant of \$3.3 Million will pay for improvements on Highland Avenue between First Avenue and the bridge approach and for Oak and Christina intersection on Needham Street. Mr. Currier also confirmed the full funding for the design and construction of the First Avenue signal which may be constructed in 2016 but cannot be put into operation until the Highland Avenue interchange is completed by the Add-a-Lane project. There was concern expressed at that hearing by some abutting land owners that the takings were far more substantial than had been previously represented, especially on Winhall properties on Highland Avenue.

Devra explained that a public hearing was held on December 22nd to introduce the project formally to the public and to introduce Barletta, who was awarded the Phase V Bridge contract. Work is presently proceeding. Certain aspects of the work have been incentivized, including a portion of the Kendrick Street interchange. The off-ramp on 128N and the on-ramp onto 128S are supposed to be

completed prior to the substantial completion date of the entire interchange (September 2016). A copy of the presentation was distributed and is available on the Town website. The Town is working with the owners' association to create a mechanism for communication with the State and contractor about updates, closures and problems that may arise.

Normandy is working with the owners association to get the funding to the Town for the Town's improvements of Second Avenue. These improvements will take place prior to the MassWorks project on Highland Avenue.

IV. Discussion of Holiday Stroll (December 6th)

Devra said that first Needham Lights, a combined event of the NBA's annual Blue Tree Lighting, the Needham Merchants Association's annual Holiday Stroll and the Community Center of Needham's luminary entertainment and parade, seemed to have been a great success. She is waiting for the NBA to send out and report back on whether merchants and restaurants found it successful to their businesses. Taylor's Stationery reported that it was extremely successful from its perspective but Closet Exchange saw no benefit.

V. Update on Mixed Use-128 Residential Overlay

The funding from the Mass Housing Partnership has been obtained for a consultant to review the multifamily zoning and preliminary fiscal analysis that Devra drafted. Rita Farrell of MHP and John Connery, the consultant Devra recommended and who has prepared a scope of the work, discussed the project last week and it has been approved by MHP for funding the consultant work for approximately \$8000.00. Lee indicated this project cannot realistically be on the Annual in May but could be on the Fall Special. Lee explained and Moe confirmed that there is support by both the BOS and Planning Board to put zoning on in the fall. Tom noted that, given the amount of time it takes to get articles ready to be placed on a warrant, offering the fall will speed things up two-fold. CEA initiatives keep getting bumped from one year to the next.

VI. Update on Industrial District Subcommittee

Devra noted her frustration about not being able to get zoning moving. Devra reminded the members that we committed the CEA into holding another public meeting to discuss our recommendations for zoning AFTER we have traffic analysis and elevation details BUT BEFORE the articles are proposed for hearing by the Planning Board. Devra reported that we now have the elevations of the areas via GIS from Ben Anderson. Devra asked Mark Gluesing if he could provide some sort of visual demonstrating the elevations of buildings on existing topography; he can but it's a couple of days work. (He thought the engineering department could do it but they have declined.) The Department has not yet confirmed whether the Town can pay Mark to prepare the elevations for us. Lee made a request for funds from FinCom to provide a source of funding for a density and the traffic analysis. The meeting with FinCom for these additional funds resulted in the FinCom recommending a general fund be created (without specifying projects—a method not yet used for planning studies) rather than an addition to the operating budget.

Lee noted that because of other items on the agenda for the fall, these zoning initiatives will not likely make it to the fall warrant. Included in the items for the fall are additional large house initiatives. It was noted that that committee is six months old; the work of this subcommittee has been going on for at least two years with public meetings having occurred almost a year ago. Concern was again expressed that economic development initiatives are not being given priority and are repeatedly delayed such that we may miss opportunities in the market.

VII. Discussion of N² and Needham Crossing Branding

Devra explained that Moe had asked that we spend time discussing the fact that our Needham Crossing Branding has been overwhelmed by marketing of N² corridor. Devra noted that she has prepared a draft application to the Babson MCFE program to see if we can get some ideas from the students on how to market this important resource and asked the members to review the draft. The members thought this was a good idea.

Rick asked Mark about the banner he discussed with Justin Krebs to go on the new TripAdvisor building—Normandy welcomes TripAdvisor to Needham Crossing. He noted that Justin thought it was a good idea and in our conversation with Mark Gluesing of the Design Review Board, it seemed to be ok. Mark is happy to help with the banner.

There was discussion of the background to the naming, branding, logo and tagline with KHJ, whom Normandy also used on Center-128. Mike will forward the signage to Mark directly. Devra will forward copies of the list of amenities and unique qualities of the NEBC, together with branding memoranda prepared in connection with the naming and logo.

It was discussed that we need to hammer the message that Needham Crossing is in the N² corridor. It was noted that the Chamber sends out email blasts using N² and right now we don't have the capacity to do that with Needham Crossing. Moe and Devra will discuss this with Greg, who has the NeedhamCrossing.net landing page on the Chamber website. It was pointed out that we need to play on Needham Crossing's inclusion in the N² corridor—Needham Crossing: The Gateway of N² or Needham Crossing at N². It was noted that commercial brokers are routinely using N² but not Needham Crossing. Moe indicated the BOS is working on making sure Needham Crossing appears on the highway signs.

VIII. Update on N² Innovation Corridor

Devra explained that the Newton-Needham Chamber of Commerce met the goal of \$50,000, including \$5000 matching funds from Needham and \$7000 from Newton. The grant has been submitted and we are still awaiting the decision on funding.

IX. Update on Babson Application for Detailed Downtown Marketing Plan

Devra reminded members that the Babson MCFE students made their presentation on Friday December 12th at 8:00-10:00 a.m. at Babson and that the presentation and documents are available online. She noted that copies of the report and power point will be available at our next meeting.

X. Update on Needham Crossing (Signage at Entrances)

Devra explained that Jon Feder of FastSigns and Mike are working on locations, which will have to be on private land. Mike agreed to reach out to the owners of the private property about posting the signage. Mike also agreed to contact the other owners and ask about using the ownership group's monies for the signs. Devra noted that there is only about \$1100 left in the branding and marketing account.

XI. Update on Downtown Subcommittee (Streamlining Suggestions)

Devra noted that since the members of the Downtown Subcommittee met with members of the Planning Board in November to discuss moving forward with additional streamlining efforts, nothing has happened. A joint meeting with the Planning Board and BOS was held about creating priorities and creating a schedule for moving these along. But as yet there is nothing to report. Lee noted that some of these require administrative action and thought some of these may be able to go on the fall warrant.

XII. Other Business

Mark Roopenian explained to the members the Normandy completed its purchase of the General Dynamics parcels at the close of last year. He advised members that Justin Krebs has left Normandy and he is taking over the Needham projects with the rest of the existing team. He outlined the current plans for the General Dynamics site—a multi-family residential component (on which Normandy is working with the Town to create plans for a friendly 40B), unanchored retail, restaurant and consumer services in one new building with office above, and renovation of two of the existing buildings. The residential component and commercial components will proceed separately but concurrently. Normandy will meet with the DRT in January and February ahead of formal filings.

Mark explained that, with respect to the 12 acres in Center 128, TripAdvisor is expected to occupy its 285,000 sq. ft. building in May/June 2015. They have an option on a 150,000 sq. ft. building which option is open until the end of 2016. The 300,000+ remaining capacity is in two other buildings. Tenants seeking to build their own space require 24 months to build out. The buildings which are in the General Dynamics site can be rehabbed within a much shorter time and, therefore, will attract a tenant which has less time to build out. The existing commercial buildings on General Dynamics site under the present plan will be reduced from about 500,000 sq. ft. to 400,000 sq. ft. Mark pointed out that General Dynamics has a one-year lease but they may vacate before that time. He understands that they have rented in Dedham.

XIII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:15 a.m.